



IDEA Public Charter School  
1027 45<sup>th</sup> Street NE  
Washington, DC 20019  
(202) 399-4750

**Mr. David Owens**

**Board Chair**

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## **Narrative**

### **A. IDEA's mission**

The mission of IDEA Public Charter School (IDEA PCS) is to prepare students with the academic, social, leadership and occupational skills for post-secondary opportunities and to be responsible citizens who contribute to the community.

### **B. School Program**

#### **1. Summary of curriculum design and instructional approach**

The academic program at IDEA PCS is designed to challenge, motivate, and strengthen the intellect of all students pursuing college, entering the workforce or the military upon graduation. Our curriculum offers a college preparatory and a JROTC program, which benefits every student who wants to become more self-disciplined and to be of greater service to his or her community. Additionally, the coursework offered in Auto-CAD and Instructional Technology classes prepare students for post-secondary study in engineering, architecture, design, among other careers with an IT or construction vocation.

#### **Academic Performance**

In overview of the Leadership Team Development, a key component of professional development at IDEA during the 2012-2013 school year has been developing a uniform skill set for lead teachers to motivate and coach teachers more effectively. An important element of this development has included training on how to create DC CAS-aligned interim assessments and how to engage in thoughtful data-driven analysis of the results.

#### **Professional Development**

Ethan Mitnick, Ed. D. is an educational consultant who has worked with DCPS and the DC Public Charter schools. From January – May 2013, Ethan observed teachers' instructional approaches at IDEA through the end of the school year. Each of the 32 teachers received two formal observations of instruction paired with follow-up feedback meetings. Based on teachers' performance and response to feedback, they were grouped into various categories (ranging from "Superior" to "Needs Additional

Support and Assistance”). Mr. Mitnick’s evaluations were key factors factor in making re-hiring decisions at the end of the year.

### Weekly Faculty Professional Development Sessions

After-school professional development sessions that took place every Wednesday afternoon from 3:30 to 5:00 also incorporated a significant focus on school-wide achievement. Based on specific areas for improvement needed in classrooms across the school, a TenSquare consultant, in collaboration with the leadership team, developed a professional development (PD) session at which teachers were trained on five high-impact strategies to improve management and instruction in their classes, as well as integrating DC CAS-related skills. The strategies included a procedure for using critical thinking and evidence while solving multiple choice questions, an increased focus on independent work, and training on a “strategic debrief” to encourage teachers to respond to student misconceptions in real time. Teachers in all disciplines received this training so that they could use and reinforce these strategies throughout the day, thereby implementing DC CAS skills preparation across the curriculum. After the training took place, the leadership team divided up the teacher roster and observed the five strategies in action through mini-observations. They followed up by sharing feedback on their observations with the teachers they observed. school’s curriculum design and instructional approach, we have developed our analyses into three key areas: Professional Development, Leadership Development and Instruction and Curriculum.

In addition to teacher observations, IDEA teachers participated in different professional development trainings after DC CAS administration came to a close. In June 2013, IDEA joined the ToPPP grant, a Race to the Top grant, administered by the Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools, which offered an array of professional development to teachers at member schools at no cost. Through the ToPPP grant, ten staff members attended Common CoreWorkshops in Literacy and Math. Six teachers also signed up to participate in the grant’s summer Inquiry Groups that consisted of teams of teachers to focusing deeply on one Common Core instructional shift to improve their practice. Two staff have also signed up for upcoming PDs. At least six teachers will attend a co-teaching PD in August offered by the ToPPP grant, and two teachers will be attending a Teachers College PD in New York City in August for advanced training on Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop.

## **Leadership Development**

### Curriculum & Intervention

In order to increase student reading proficiency, IDEA launched the Accelerated Reader program at all grade levels. Accelerated Reader is a research based reading program that has been found to be effective for adolescent readers to improve comprehension and fluency. This program allows students to set reading goals, to track the amount they have read, and to think more critically about their independent reading books. Readers were paired with on level reading texts based on students' Lexile scores, a research based best-practice. Since the implementation of the program from the beginning of February 2013, teachers noticed significant improvements in students' independent reading abilities, stamina, and text analyses.

The IDEA leadership team also identified critical materials for teaching DC CAS aligned skills and shared these materials with teachers. These materials include middle school Common-Core aligned test preparation books from Triumph Learning, MCAS (Massachusetts) Common-Core aligned test preparation books, and online resources used for both ELA and math. Teachers received feedback on how to build key question stems not only into interims and quizzes, but also into class work and class discussion protocols. To develop students writing for the DC CAS short response and composition sections, the school adopted a school-wide writing strategy called "RACERS" that helped to scaffold analytical writing pieces that teachers were able to teach not only in ELA classes but also in other content-area classes such as Science and Social Studies. In math, teachers identified how to incorporate math formulas provided on the DC CAS into instruction. And, teachers identified key calculator operations necessary for success on the DC CAS and how to incorporate these functions into teaching.

In January, due to the significant need for academic improvement in the testing grades, IDEA's leadership team also designed a comprehensive plan for intervention for its 7th, 8th, and 10th grade students.

### Middle school interventions

For the 7th and 8th graders, IDEA created Targeted Intervention (TI) groups that students would attend for 90 minutes every morning, alternating ELA and math every other day. TI groups were comprised of 5-10 students grouped homogeneously based on common academic strengths and weaknesses and staffed by a trained IDEA teacher. Lead ELA and Math teachers designed the lesson plans for TI classes and

shared these lessons in a timely fashion with the teachers assigned to work with each group. TI has become a critical time of day for students to receive explicit instruction on critical DC CAS skills in a small group setting. TI groups meet first thing in the morning to maximize on student alertness and endurance.

### High school interventions

Intervention for 10th grade students has proceeded as small group and 1:1 individualized. Each tenth grade English teacher was assigned ten, 10th graders and one middle school English teacher was assigned to eight students who were in need of focused small group support. In small groups, the teachers and students reviewed assessment items and practiced skills with grade-level short texts.

At the beginning of March, an additional teacher was hired to work with students in small groups. In addition, teachers were doubled up so that 10th graders had two teachers in their math classrooms. One of these teachers was able to pull small groups to offer targeted supports to more students. In the four weeks leading up to the test, Tuesday and Thursday the math lead teacher also offered tutoring and additional help.

### Spring Break Academy and Saturday Academy

To offer 10th graders needing additional math support, IDEA conducted a Spring Break institute for math tutoring and math support on Saturdays. Over Spring Break, 3, two-hour sessions were offered. Each Saturday session was three hours in length. These sessions were well-staffed by adults which allowed students to receive tutoring in very small groups (between one and three students in size).

### Full-School Data Days

Until the end of April, 2013, the IDEA team was primarily focused on a successful DC CAS implementation. TenSquare supported IDEA's leadership team by offering recommendations and feedback about this implementation.

Recognizing the need for the entire school faculty and staff to analyze and interact with student outcome data, four Full-School Data Days were held (October 15, 2012, full day; November 20, 2012, half day; February 1, 2013, half day, March 11, 2013, full day). Data Days were implemented for the entire staff to look closely at student data from interim assessments, and data analysis sessions were led by IDEA's lead

teachers in ELA and Math. This area of professional development included the following components:

- Close analysis of student outcomes on interim exams 3 and 4 identifying grade level and student level standard mastery;
- Teachers across subject and grade levels planning out standards based re-teaching lessons and activities based on student outcomes;
- Teachers in subject teams mapping backwards unit instruction based on student and grade level standards mastery.

The leadership team worked together to create the agendas for these days based on the current needs of the school. In addition to interim data analysis and re-teaching planning, teachers engaged in data “Chat and Chews” over breakfast so that they could make observations on student performance data. Teachers, alongside the lead team, also took time to engage in critical school culture planning to encourage motivation and investment in students. The data-days planning resulted in a number of incentives for students to improve their interim achievement including a Pep Rally and field trips. Teachers of testing grades who do not teach ELA and math received training on how to integrate key DC CAS skills into their instruction to ensure students received as much skill practice as possible.

In May and June, IDEA modified its academic leadership structure for the 2013-14 school year, and created a Principal and an Assistant Principal (Director of Academics) position, a team of content-area Department leaders, and a team of Grade Level leaders. The consulting firm, TenSquare, worked closely with Justin Rydstrom to create job descriptions and applications for these positions. TenSquare also supported with planning the Summer Leadership Retreat held three times in June to ensure that departmental leaders were working together to engage in strategic planning for the 2013-2014 school year as effectively as possible.

### **Instruction and Curriculum**

During the regular 2012-13 school year, several major administrative changes took place at IDEA that impacted the school’s curricular focus. All teachers in the core subjects were requested to place a stronger emphasis in reading and in math, because in the 2011-2012 school year over 70% of all students taking the DC-CAS exams did not meet grade level standards in these two subject areas. Subsequently, forty students were asked to attend summer school to remediate in course they failed during the regular school year.

During the school year, teachers received multiple observations by the leadership team and consultants. In addition to feedback on management and effective instructional strategies, explicit feedback was provided on effective high-impact strategies for DC CAS success. Four members of the leadership team also give targeted feedback to teachers in the testing grades. As a result of this feedback, both classroom management and instructional strategies have improved significantly in 7th, 8th, and 10th grade math and ELA classes. There are fewer behavior issues and higher levels of student engagement during learning activities.

IDEA's 2013 Summer School Session began on June 24th and concluded on July 26<sup>th</sup> (23 instructional days). There were 40 active 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th graders on the Summer School roster. Approximately 33 IDEA students are currently seeking credit recovery in the following instructional areas: Algebra 1, English 9, DC History, Chemistry, US History and Earth Science.

IDEA also provided a self-contained classroom environment for seven special education students, taught by two members of the IDEA Special Education teaching staff. During summer school, staff continued to enforce the summer school attendance criteria, student uniform policy, behavior, and academic excellence and student response has been very positive and encouraging.

Another summer initiative was offered for students for the rigor of Common Core Standards, and teams of teachers are currently engaged in math and literacy curriculum planning.

2. Parent involvement efforts, describing the methods and frequency of parent involvement
  - 1) All parents were invited to a Back-to-School general meeting in August 2012;
  - 2) IDEA held family conferences three times in school year 2013 to inform parents of their children's progress;
  - 3) When students have behavioral, academic or attendance problems, the Principal will call in parents for a "contract meeting".



## **II. School Performance**

### **A. Performance and Progress**

1. Describe the extent to which the school is meeting its mission, detailing programs and/or methodologies through which the school pursues its mission.

A strong college acceptance rate is a reliable indicator that the school is meeting its mission, “to prepare students with the academic, social, leadership and occupational skills for post-secondary opportunities and to be responsible citizens who contribute to the community.”

In fulfillment of the school’s mission, one hundred percent of the 52 graduating seniors were accepted into college and university and ten students are considering enlisting to enlist in the US Army to continue their training and service to the country.

#### Review of Performance and Progress

During the 2012-2013 school year, the IDEA leadership and teaching team implemented a highly comprehensive interim assessment system at the school. The lead team received professional development from TenSquare consultants to align teaching and interim assessments to the DC CAS. An introductory session was conducted in August with follow up sessions in October, in time for the first interim assessment. TenSquare provided direct professional development on aligning question stems to the DC CAS, mapping instruction to standards, and analyzing student data. An interim assessment evaluation template was developed to evaluate the alignment of each interim assessment to the DC CAS, based on the resource guide. Data reporting formats and structures were also reviewed with the lead team. Students in grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 took four interim assessments in math and English between October and March.

The lead team followed a detailed process for developing and analyzing the interim assessments. First, each assessment was written by IDEA lead teachers. TenSquare reviewed each assessment and provided feedback for revisions. Additionally, consultants assisted with finding question-content using Common Core aligned questions in math and English. The consultant’s review considered the rigor of reading passages, the distribution of questions, question stem alignment, and alignment to Common Core standards. TenSquare approved interim assessments used based on the aforementioned criteria. After each interim, the lead team, along with TenSquare consultants, dissected student outcomes of each interim. While aggregate

outcome data was reviewed, in depth standard and question analysis was critical to this process. The team reviewed how students did on each question and the answer distribution for each to dissect common mistakes, misunderstandings, and highlight mastery. Student mastery across standards was used to make revisions to the curriculum, especially in math. Results of the interim 2 and 3 were the impetus for intervention strategies mentioned above. The results of these assessments were used to plan the interventions, identify students, and determine strategies. The results of interim 4 were used to plan Saturday and spring break interventions for students.

In reviewing the data of interim 2, the lead team coordinated efforts around assessment practices. With the guidance of TenSquare consultants, the lead team implemented a testing schedule to create an optimal testing environment. Procedures were implemented for testing absent students, for activities in non-testing grades, and for aligning common grading practices for open response questions. Processes were also established for mimicking the DC CAS administration including suggested times and process for students who need extended time, testing special education students in small groups, and student access to DC CAS math reference cards. The lead team aimed to develop an optimal testing environment for students as well as practice testing procedures for staff.

From the interim assessment program, teachers and leaders at IDEA had a clearer picture of student performance on DC CAS aligned assessments. Student performance data on key interim exams is explained in further detail in the sections below.

#### 10th Grade ELA

Performance	Interim 1	Interim 2	Interim 3	Interim 4
Less than 50%	11	13	7	5
50%-59%	21	20	16	9
60%-69%	11	4	8	11
70% and above	11	23	24	29
Number of students tested	54	60	55	54

Comments: Over the course of the four interim assessments, 10th grade ELA showed considerable improvement. The number of students scoring below 50% and from 50% to 59% dropped significantly (29%) from the first to the 4th interim. Additionally, the proportion of students who scored in the proficient range (70% and

above) increased from 20% to 54% demonstrating the effects of the interventions and curriculum and instructional tweaks.

#### 10th Grade Math

Performance	Interim 1	Interim 2	Interim 3	Interim 4
Less than 40%	16	29	26	20
40%-45%	7	15	12	14
46%-50%	4	3	9	7
51% and above	4	9	7	13
Number of students tested	33	56	54	54

Comments: The percentage bands are different for 10th grade math because proficiency cut-offs on the exam are set at 50%. It is important to note that nearly half of the students did not test in interim 1 so the results are not indicative of grade level performance. When reviewing the data based on these adjusted performance levels, one positive indicator is that more students scored over 50% between interims one and four. However, the number of students in the less than 40% category and the 40%-45% category remained high on all of the exams. Notably, the proportion of students in the lowest band (<40%) fell between interim 2 (51%) and interim 4 (37%), a 14 percentage point drop. In comparing the proportion of students who were proficient from interim 2 to interim 4, an increase of 8 percentage points is evident indicating growth.

Through the process of administering interim assessments, IDEA teachers and leaders identified instructional and test-preparation strategies that worked well as well as strategies that were not as effective at pushing achievement. For example, in 10th grade ELA, the interim that showed the most student growth, the teachers were able to implement specific strategies such as “RACERS” for writing organization and “Catch and Match” for multiple choice analysis. Students also had the same teachers for the whole year in their ELA class. In 10th grade math, an interim that showed little growth, however, the team in reflection feels they did not spend enough time focusing on remedial skills that students needed to demonstrate proficiency in grade level standards.

2. Describe the extent to which the school is meeting its goals and academic achievement expectations detailed in its charter.

The IDEA Charter School spent the 2012-2013 school year making a thorough assessment of its core academic programs and ancillary technical courses, which included the Computer Aided Drafting, Introduction to Drafting, Principles of Technology and certified IT courses offered by the Microsoft Academy. During this school year, teachers and administrators worked to ensure all students were reading and performing in math at or above grade level, normal prerequisites for performing satisfactorily in the technical courses.

Subsequently, in 2013, 60.9 percent of IDEA students scored proficient or advanced in reading, an exceptional 25.8 percentage point improvement over students' reading performance in 2012. In math, 51.4 percent of students achieved proficient or advanced scores, a 16.2 percentage point gain over last year. IDEA's composite score increased by 21 percentage points, from 35.2 percent in 2012 to 56.2 percent this year.

3. For schools with early childhood and/or adult education programs, discuss the extent to which the school met the targets detailed in the corresponding accountability plan. For targets that were not met, provide further context.

Not applicable.

## **B. Lessons Learned and Action Taken**

**Describe lessons learned and/or actions taken or planned based on the school's performance and progress described above. This may include modifications made to instructional programming, parental involvement, professional development, human capital and/or supplemental programming.**

One of the major changes at IDEA is the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade (middle school) offerings, the last of these grades that were held in the 2012-2013 school year. Subsequently, emphasis will be made in student achievement in grades 9-12 through early identification and intervention for students needing remediation in the core subjects, greater involvement and investment of time made by parents and IDEA's board members to provide internships and several other out of school classroom activities to help enhance their interests in architecture as obtainable and realistic vocational career option.

## **Other Observations: Assessment**

Because of DC CAS, during the April to June period, no additional interim exams were administered. IDEA received DC CAS scores during the week of July 8 and was pleased to see significant increases in student performance.

Reflecting on the administration of DC-CAS, the school administration was also pleased to see teachers pay greater attention to detail regarding compliant procedures and protocols. The school will mirror the process when administering the DC CAS for the 2013-2014 school year.

### Preparation

From September 2012, preparation to excel on the DC-CAS Math tests kept students focused on one content area at a time, off-site programming (including SAT Prep classes for Juniors) for non-tested grades, administration of NWEA's MAP test for ninth grade math, and a school-wide Pep Rally prior to testing weeks. Administration of end-of-year final exams also went smoothly during the month of June; as with DC CAS, IDEA plans to implement a similar process next year.

In addition to reflecting on DC CAS and final exam administration, the IDEA team has engaged in planning for quality assessment in the 2013-2014 school year by entering into a partnership with the Achievement Network ("ANet"), an interim assessment provider with a significant focus on coaching teachers and leaders to use best practices for data-driven instruction. ANet will offer interims to 9th and 10th grades in its partner schools in DC during the 2013-2014 school year. IDEA is entering into the ANet partnership to both ensure the use of high-quality assessments to measure student learning and to develop the skills of its teachers and leaders in the process of analyzing instructional data. Initial ANet professional developments and meetings have been scheduled for key staff on the IDEA leadership team.

### **C. Unique Accomplishments**

Describe unique accomplishments achieved, awards earned, and/or other recognition.

IDEA students who took the 2013 DC CAS test showed the greatest improvement rate in the city. IDEA's overall score grew 21%, placing 56.2% students meeting or exceeding academic standards!

- IDEA students proficient or advanced in MATH: 51.4%, a 16.2% increase from the 2013 DC CAS exam results;

- IDEA students proficient or advanced in READING: 60.9%, a 25.8% increase from the 2013 DC CAS exam results.